

StormReady NWS Tallahassee Area Organization and Operations Manual

**NWS Warning and Forecast Office
3300 Capital Circle SW
Tallahassee, FL 32310
850-942-8999**

StormReady Organization and Operations Manual

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Section 1.0

StormReady Overview

Many laws and regulations have been created to help local emergency managers deal with hazardous material spills, search and rescue operations, medical crises, etc., but there are relatively few uniformly-recognized standards dealing with the specifics of hazardous weather response operations. Recognizing this need, the National Weather Service (NWS), has designed a program to help cities, counties, and towns implement procedures to reduce the potential for disastrous, weather-related, consequences. By participating in this program, called “StormReady”, local agencies can earn recognition for their jurisdiction by meeting criteria established by the NWS in partnership with federal, state, and local emergency management professionals. The StormReady program is intended to:

- ◆ Improve the timeliness and effectiveness of hazardous weather warnings for the public.
- ◆ Provide detailed and clear recommendations by which local emergency managers may establish/improve effective hazardous weather operations.
- ◆ Help local emergency managers justify costs and purchases related to supporting their hazardous weather-related program.
- ◆ Reward local hazardous-weather mitigation programs that have achieved a desired performance level.
- ◆ Provide a means of acquiring additional Community Rating System points assigned by the Insurance Services Organization (ISO). (This is currently under consideration by ISO officials.)
- ◆ Provide an “image incentive” to counties, cities, and towns that can identify themselves as being “StormReady”
- ◆ Encourage the enhancement of hazardous weather preparedness programs in jurisdictions surrounding “StormReady” Communities and Counties.

StormReady is a voluntary program, and is being offered as a means of providing guidance and incentive to officials interested in improving their respective hazardous weather operations. **Implied or explicit references to “requirements” are made with regard to the voluntary participants in the StormReady program and should not be construed as being state or federal mandates.**

Section 2.0

StormReady Advisory Board Organization

Implementation and oversight of the StormReady program is completed through the formation of StormReady Advisory Boards. Advisory boards shall be set up on a national, regional and local basis.

Section 2.1

National StormReady Advisory Board

The National StormReady Advisory Board is responsible for general oversight of the StormReady program. The primary mission of the national board is to maintain a “minimum” set of recognition criteria that is consistent across the country with regard to technology, while at the same time allowing for local flexibility in terms of planning and preparedness activities.

Existing and proposed criteria are reviewed at the National StormReady Advisory Board’s annual meeting, with updated criteria formally published by the board on or before October 1st of each federal fiscal year.

The National StormReady Advisory Board is comprised of:

- NWS Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) Program Leader (NWSH)
- NWS Eastern Region WCM Program Leader
- NWS Southern Region WCM Program Leader
- NWS Central Region WCM Program Leader
- NWS Western Region WCM Program Leader
- NWS Alaska Region WCM Program Leader
- NWS Pacific Region WCM Program Leader

Section 2.2

Regional StormReady Advisory Board

Each of the NWS's six regional offices shall establish Regional StormReady Advisory Board. Team membership shall be determined by the Regional Director.

Regional StormReady Advisory Boards shall monitor the activities of local boards and ensure the spirit of the national criteria is maintained. Regional boards also collect and review proposed criteria change recommendations received from the Local StormReady Advisory Boards. Recommendations for change to the national criteria shall be forwarded to the National StormReady Advisory Board for consideration.

Section 2.3

Local Area StormReady Advisory Board - Tallahassee

The board shall consist of:

- 1 - NWS Tallahassee Meteorologist in Charge - Paul Duval
- 1 - NWS Tallahassee Warning Coordination Meteorologist - Bob Goree
- 2 - State emergency management agency Area Coordinators - Jim Helms
Hank Jacobs
- 1 - State DEM representative - Ben Nelson
- 2 - Emergency management association representatives - Robby Powers
Richard Smith

In addition, the board includes affiliate members including:

- ◆ American Red Cross
- ◆ Florida Alliance for Safe Homes

This StormReady Local Advisory Board is responsible for all steps leading to the recognition of the StormReady county. This includes developing by-laws for the board's activities, localization of the national criteria, establishing procedures for verification visits, and implementing procedures for application review.

Section 3.0

StormReady Application Process

Application for StormReady recognition is a formal process requiring a written application, verification visit(s), local board action, and recognition.

Section 3.1

Application Submission

Any county desiring to be considered for StormReady recognition should prepare a written application following the categories outlined in Appendix B and submit it to the NWS Tallahassee office.

Since counties have jurisdiction over communities and unincorporated areas, a single application is sufficient, with the combined populations used as a basis for determining the appropriate criteria categories.

While much of the application is a basic accounting of technology, a brief narrative describing aspects of preparedness and planning activities is necessary and will aid in assessing such things as the hazardous weather plan, exercises and public safety programs.

The application will be duplicated by the StormReady Local Advisory Board Chairperson and provided to each board member. The StormReady Chairperson shall assign a team to visit the applicant and formally discuss the application.

Section 3.2

StormReady Verification Visit

A verification team of no less than 2 members shall be assembled by the StormReady Chairperson to visit an applicant. The verification team should be composed of, at a minimum, one NWS person and one emergency management representative. StormReady verification team members should be StormReady Advisory Board members, or other individuals deemed qualified to make an assessment by the Local StormReady Advisory Board.

During the verification visit, a Site Visit Summary (Appendix C) shall be completed separately and signed by each member of the verification team. During the site visit, a review of the applicant's hazardous weather plan will occur. This review may require the applicant to explain procedures to ensure that the content meets StormReady Criteria. A full copy of the applicant's Hazardous Weather Plan does not need to be submitted to the StormReady Advisory Board; however, the verification team may request a copy for further offsite review.

Upon completing a site visit, the verification team shall forward to the Local Advisory Board their Site Visit Summaries, along with any additional comments or documentation deemed pertinent.

Section 3.3

StormReady Board Review

The Local StormReady Advisory Board shall review a jurisdiction's application and associated site visit summaries at the local boards next regularly scheduled meeting after the site visit. The local StormReady Advisory Board may approve an application for recognition after this first review.

If the recognition is not approved, the local board shall provide written guidance on improvements needed to achieve recognition. Upon written response from the applying jurisdiction, a subsequent StormReady verification visit and local board review shall be scheduled. If a community disputes a decision made by the local advisory board, the dispute shall be forwarded to the Regional StormReady Advisory Board for resolution.

Section 3.4

The Recognition Process

When in the opinion of the StormReady Advisory Board an applicant has met the criteria for recognition, the local board has the authority to grant recognition. Notification of a recognition shall be given to the National and Regional Advisory Boards.

The successful applicant will receive a formal notification letter from the appropriate NWS Meteorologist in Charge, two StormReady signs suitable for display along roadways (four for combined community / county applicants), authorization to use the StormReady logo, instructions for acquiring additional roadway signs, and information concerning the notification of the Insurance Services Organization (ISO) for possible adjustment to insurance rates (Section 3.8).

Recognition shall be for a period of two years from the date of the formal announcement.

Section 3.5

Recognition Ceremony

Details of the recognition announcement and ceremony shall be coordinated between the applicant and the NWS office which has responsibility for the community or county.

A typical ceremony would require a formal media announcement and should be a combination of the unveiling of the StormReady roadway signs and a subsequent press conference. See Appendix D for a sample ceremony program.

Section 4.0

Insurance Services Organization (ISO)

Accredited jurisdictions participating in the National Flood Insurance Program can receive Community Rating Points (CRP) towards lowering flood insurance rates. StormReady counties should forward a copy of their recognition letter to their ISO representative for details.

Section 5.0

Recognition Monitoring

While a formal plan to monitor a recognized jurisdiction is not presently deemed necessary, if a formal concern is brought to the StormReady Advisory Board, the local board shall review the concern and holds the option to suspend the recognition for 60 days while a review is conducted.

If the local board review indicates the community or county no longer meets StormReady criteria, it will request the road signs be removed. A written notification shall be made to the ISO informing them of the action.

Section 6.0

Re-Recognition

StormReady recognitions are valid for two years from the date of the formal announcement / ceremony. The Local StormReady Advisory Board shall, six months prior to the expiration of the recognition, notify recognized jurisdictions in writing of their need to re-apply. Applicable criteria shall be those published at the time of the notification.

It is the goal of the Local StormReady Advisory Board to maintain an atmosphere of constant improvement, and strive to keep the evaluation criteria representative of the advancing technology and techniques.

Appendix A

StormReady Population-Based Criteria

Since the tax base typically dictates the resources applied to public programs, the criteria for successful participation in the StormReady Program are based on population. Although subject to later refinement, four population categories will be used for developing appropriate recognition criteria related to weather disaster preparedness. The population-based categories are:

Criteria	Population			
	< 2,500	2,500 - 14,999	15,000 - 40,000	> 40,000
Criterion 1: Communications				
Established 24 hr Warning Point (WP)	Local WP	X	X	X
Established Emergency Operations Center		X	X	X
Number of severe weather reports relayed to NWS per event or warning. Use of report form (appendix E)	1	1	1	1
Criterion 2: NWS Information Reception				
Number of ways for EOC/WP to receive NWS warning. (NWR-SAME and EMWIN required)	3	4	4	4
Criterion 3: Hydrometeorological Monitoring				
Number of ways to monitor Hydrometeorological data.	1	2	3	4
Criterion 4: Local Warning Dissemination				
Number of ways for EOC/WP to disseminate warnings	1	2	3	4
NWR - SAME receivers in public facilities	X	X	X	X
Criterion 5: Community Preparedness				
Number of annual weather safety talks	1	2	3	4
Spotters and dispatchers trained biennially	X	X	X	X
Host / co-host annual NWS spotter training				X
Criterion 6: Administrative				
Formal hazardous weather operations plan	X	X	X	X
Biennial visits by emergency manager to NWS office	X	X	X	X
Annual visits by NWS official to community	X	X	X	X

Appendix A
StormReady Criteria
(Continued)

Criterion 1: Communications & Coordination Center

The key to disaster management is effective communication. This is especially true in weather emergencies where rapid changes may permit only short lead-time warnings that require an immediate, educated response.

1. 24-Hour Warning Point. To receive recognition under the StormReady Program, an applying agency will need to have a 24-hour warning point (WP) that can receive NWS information and provide local reports and advice. Typically, this might be a law enforcement or fire department dispatching point. For cities or towns without a local dispatching point, a county agency could act in that capacity for them. The warning point will need to have:

- ▶ 24 hour operations.
- ▶ Warning reception capability.
- ▶ Warning dissemination capability.
- ▶ Ability and authority to activate local warning system(s).

2. Emergency Operations Center. Agencies serving jurisdictions larger than 2,500 people will need an emergency operations center (EOC). The EOC will need to be staffed during hazardous weather events and, when staffed, would assume the warning point's hazardous weather functions. The following summarizes the weather-related roles of an EOC:

- ▶ May assume weather-related duties of warning point, when staffed.
- ▶ Activated based on predetermined guidelines related to NWS information and/or weather events.
- ▶ Staffed with emergency management director or designee.
- ▶ Warning reception capability.
- ▶ Ability and authority to activate local warning system(s). Must have capabilities equal to or better than the warning point.
- ▶ Ability to communicate with adjacent EOCs/Warning Points.
- ▶ Established communications link with NWS to relay real time weather information to support the warning decision making process.

Appendix A
StormReady Criteria
(Continued)

3. Severe Weather Information Exchange. Rapid exchange of weather information between NWS and local jurisdictions is an important part of the NWS warning program. This includes the reporting of severe weather to the NWS from the 24 hour Warning Point or the EOC.

StormReady recognized counties should provide the NWS Tallahassee with at least one report for each severe weather event or one report each time a warning is issued for the county. Severe events include:

- Tornado
- Dime - sized hail or larger
- Wind measured at 58 mph or greater
- Structural and or tree damage due to winds
- accumulations of snow and/or ice
- significant Coastal Flooding

A report should also be sent soon after a warning has been issued for the county. This criteria applies to the following warnings:

- Severe Thunderstorm
- Tornado
- Flood or Flash Flood (other than rivers)
- Coastal Flood

Appendix E contains a reporting form for StormReady counties to use for making severe weather reports.

Appendix A
StormReady Criteria
(Continued)

Criterion 2: National Weather Service Warning Reception

Warning points and EOCs each need multiple ways to receive NWS warnings. The StormReady Program criteria for receiving NWS warnings in an EOC/WP require a combination of the following, based on population (see Appendix A):

- ▶ NOAA Weather Radio receiver with Specific Area Message Encoding (NWR-SAME): ***Required for recognition, if within range of transmitter.***
- ▶ Emergency Management Weather Information Network (EMWIN) receiver: Satellite feed and/or VHF radio transmission of NWS products. Or receipt of EMWIN data feed via FL DEM satellite system (***Required for recognition.***)
- ▶ NOAA Weather Wire drop: Satellite downlink data feed from NWS
- ▶ Statewide law enforcement telecommunications: Automatic relay of NWS products on law enforcement systems.
- ▶ Amateur Radio transceiver: Potential communications directly to NWS office
- ▶ Pagers: From a provider not directly tied to a local system such as EMWIN.
- ▶ Television: Local network or cable TV.
- ▶ Local Radio (Emergency Alert System - LP1/LP2).
- ▶ Other: For example, active participation in a state-run warning network.
- ▶ National Warning System (NAWAS) drop: FEMA-controlled civil defense hotline.

Criterion 3: Hydrometeorological Monitoring

While receipt of warnings is crucial to the success of any EOC or warning point, there should also be a means of monitoring weather information, especially radar data. To obtain StormReady Program recognition, each EOC/WP (based on population) should have some combination of the following recommended means of gathering ancillary weather information:

- ▶ Local network or cable TV.
- ▶ Internet access to radar data.
- ▶ Dedicated radar data feed from NEXRAD vendor or local TV station.
- ▶ Instruments to provide a measure of local conditions and/or hydrologic conditions (cannot be the sole means of hydrometeorological monitoring) i.e. wind equipment, river gages etc.
- ▶ Locally owned and operated weather radar.

Appendix A

StormReady Criteria (Continued)

Criterion 4: Warning Dissemination

Once NWS warnings are received, or local information suggests an imminent weather threat, the goal of the local emergency officials should be to communicate with as much of the population as possible. Receiving StormReady recognition will be contingent upon having one or more of the following means of ensuring timely warning dissemination to citizens (based on population):

- ▶ At least one NWR-SAME receiver in each government-owned building that is accessed by the public, such as schools, hospitals, and administrative buildings (this is required if a signal can be received). Local ordinances are recommended to ensure this.
- ▶ A community program that subsidizes the purchase of NWR-SAME receivers, provided a NOAA Weather Radio signal can be received.
- ▶ Cable television audio/video overrides.
- ▶ Local Flood warning systems with no single point of failure.
- ▶ Other locally-controlled methods like a local broadcast system or sirens on emergency vehicles.
- ▶ Outdoor warning sirens.
- ▶ *Counties Only:* A County-wide communications network that ensures the flow of information between all cities and towns within its borders. This would include acting as a warning point for the smaller towns.

Appendix A
StormReady Criteria
(Continued)

Criterion 5: Preparedness

Public education is vital in preparing citizens to respond properly to weather threats. An educated public most likely will take steps to receive weather warnings, recognize potentially threatening weather situations, and act appropriately to those situations. Agencies seeking recognition in the StormReady Program will need to:

- ▶ Conduct or facilitate safety talks for schools, hospitals, nursing homes and industries (number of talks per year will be based on population).
- ▶ Accomplish weather-related safety campaigns which include publicity for NOAA Weather Radios where coverage exists.

Criterion 6: Administrative

No program can be successful without formal planning and pro-active administration. To be recognized in the StormReady Program:

Approved hazardous weather action plans will need to be in place. These plans will need to address, at a minimum, the following:

- ▶ Warning point procedures.
- ▶ NWR Alert Reception Log in use (see appendix F)
- ▶ Sever Weather Event Report form in use (see appendix E)
- ▶ EOC activation criteria and procedures.
- ▶ Storm spotter activation criteria and reporting procedures.
- ▶ Storm spotter roster and training record.
- ▶ Criteria and procedures for activation of sirens, cable television override, and/or local systems activation in accordance with state Emergency Alert System (EAS) plans.
- ▶ Annual exercises.

EOC/Warning point staff and field personnel will need to attend NWS storm spotter training sessions at least every other year. All jurisdictions larger than 40,000 people will need to host/co-host a spotter training session every year.

To facilitate close working relationships, the community/county emergency management program leader will need to visit the supporting NWS office at least every other year. NWS officials will commit to visit accredited counties, cities, and towns annually to tour EOCs/Warning Points and meet with key officials.

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Appendix B

(application form)

StormReady
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Appendix D

(sample StormReady Ceremony Agenda)

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Appendix E

StormReady
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Appendix F

